Voyage de l'âme

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Voyage de l'âme

by Maidenhair_Tree

Summary

As a connoisseur of art, science, and philosophy, Hannibal is intrigued by what the French call voyage de l'âme. But it is not something that he has ever wanted to personally experience.

There is little to compel him to want to change places with a lesser being. Hannibal is tall, handsome, and moves with the grace of a dancer. He is ambidextrous and his hands are equally skilled in repairing a heart, playing the harpsichord, and sketching Will Graham’s perfectly formed gluteal muscles. He is kind and possesses empathy, so there is no lesson for him to learn by spending a day in someone else’s cheap shoes.

Well, at least, that was his stance until recently. In the two years since Hannibal began his residency at the Baltimore State Hospital for the Criminally Insane, he has come to long to exchange bodies with anyone else.

Prologue

Body swapping was once quite common but it rarely occurs these days.

References are found in the art and literature and histories of the world. Accounts of body swapping are found in the *Torah, Vedas, Bible, Koran , and Kojiki* .

The Saan people of Southern Africa believe that the creation god Kaang dwells in all humans and precipitates mind swaps to resolve conflicts. Divine intervention is a common explanation for switching in many religions but scholars believe that this is the oldest.

Gilgamesh and Enkydu swapped. So did Heracles and Iphatas following a curse from Hera. Even Xena and Gabrielle swapped in a plot heavily borrowed from the Heracles myth but with Ares as the instigator.

Achilles and Patroclus never swapped because their love was so great that their souls merged.

Penelope's patient waiting for her husband was rewarded when they swapped bodies and she learned that he was indeed trying to make his way back to her, although the swap did occur while he was mid coitus with Calypso. Since the *Iliad* was written by a man, she excused her husband's infidelity.

An apocryphal version of the Garden of Eden tells that the first swap in history was between Adam and Eve, and that the fall of paradise occurred when Adam, in Eve's form, bit into the forbidden apple. Modern feminists theorize that this proves that men are more susceptible to temptation and therefore the weaker sex. Many Catholic orders and Protestant denominations view it as more equal, that both man and woman share responsibility.

Of course, the Southern Baptists, Evangelicals, and Catholic Traditionalists reject the apocryphal version entirely and point to Genesis as the only true account.

The Protestant Bible contains four accounts of body swapping. The most widely known comes from The Book of John, and tells how Jesus and Judas swapped bodies during the crucifixion. The betrayer was so horrified by what he had experienced and his role in bringing it about that he had killed himself immediately upon returning to his own body. The other Gospels do not include a body swap but this has not stopped John's account from becoming the most popular and accepted accounting of the crucifixion.

The tales continue on in later eras. Swapping is found in *Le Morte d'Arthur, The Reingold, Genji Monogatari, The Rainbow Serpent, One Thousand and One Nights, and Beowulf* . It is depicted in Mayan and Aztec art as well as the paintings of the Italian Renaissance (it is curiously not a common theme in Northern Renaissance art).

A prevailing theory regarding the great stone heads of Easter Island is that they were erected to commemorate swaps. There is no way to prove or disprove this hypothesis but it is largely embraced because the world loves a good swap story.

However, swapping has become increasingly rare the past few centuries. The decline aligns with the start of the Industrial Age. As a result, technology is generally regarded as responsible. What is the value of a swap when the telegraph, the steam engine, and the printing press have shrunk the world. As global interaction and communication became easier, the universe no longer saw swapping as necessary.

In the year 2022, the most recent year with data available, there were only thirty-one confirmed swaps. Sixty-two people out of a global population of 9 billion.

Scientists, theologians, philosophers, and poets all question why and how to reverse. But, since no one understands the mechanics of swapping, it is a question that will remain unanswered. But it does not stop the "experts" from speaking. Some urge prayer and others promote crystals and others advocate Luddism. Some insist that it is the result of the destruction of the rain forest, while others point to the loss of the whales. Hitler had horrible theories about it, and so did Charles Manson and every other cult leader.

But, ultimately all anyone really knows is that the one confirmed piece of magic in the world is disappearing and, with its loss, the world becomes more dreary with each passing day.

Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

Hannibal enters the story.

As a connoisseur of art, science, and philosophy, Hannibal is intrigued by what the French call *voyage de l'âme* . But it is not something that he has ever wanted to personally experience.

There is little to compel him to want to change places with a lesser being. Hannibal is tall, handsome, and moves with the grace of a dancer. He is ambidextrous and his hands are equally skilled in repairing a heart, playing the harpsichord, and sketching Will Graham's perfectly formed gluteal muscles. He is kind and possesses empathy, so there is no lesson for him to learn by spending a day in someone else's cheap shoes.

Well, at least, that was his stance until recently. In the two years since Hannibal began his residency at the Baltimore State Hospital for the Criminally Insane, he has come to long to exchange bodies with anyone else.

Wealth, sex, age, and nationality are not important. He simply longs to take a long hot shower, masturbate in private, feel the sun on his face, and use the internet to find Will Graham. He also needs to transfer some money, and get updated information on his enemies. In addition, he needs to call Chiyoh to further plan his future escape but also just for the joy of a friendly conversation. Swaps usually last for three days so plenty of time to accomplish everything on his list.

Except the mysterious forces behind swaps are not accommodating his needs. The indignity of no privacy, cheap fabrics, and disgusting food is not being addressed. Will Graham's continued absence is slowly grinding away at his soul, and the lack of intelligent conversation is dulling his senses although that could be a result of the drug regimen that has been forced upon him by Alana.

Ah, yes, his increasingly self important protege. Hannibal has already promised to kill her, a vow that he more fervently embraces with each passing pant suit. Each attempt at witticism. Each reminder that she alone holds the keys to the five doors that stands between him and freedom.

Yes, he dreams of killing Alana in increasingly violent ways and his only regret is that she has but one life to give. Of course, he will kill Margot, too, and possibly the boy if he cannot indulge all of his fantasies with the child's mothers.

But all of this requires planning and a soul transfer would be a great help, and for two years it has not happened. However, on day 747, the mysterious forces behind body swapping finally pay him a visit.

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Hannibal recognizes immediately upon awakening that he is no longer in his body.

He is lying in darkness on a luxury mattress covered by soft sheets and blankets. These are luxuries denied to him at the BSHCI. The lights are dimmed at night but never fully extinguished, and bedding is prohibited as it could be used as a weapon.

But the best indicator is that his host's breasts and right hip ache.

Sore is perhaps the better description of the breast discomfort; pleasantly sore would be even more accurate. Clearly his host has engaged in sex recently and her breasts received a great deal of attention.

The hip pain is not pleasant. It is a deep ache and Hannibal's first thought is that there must be rain in the forecast. His jailer does a good job of disguising her ongoing hip pain but, as a surgeon, Hannibal has not been deceived. Modern medicine can do only so much for such a devastating injury.

Hannibal has long considered potential swap options and what he would do in each scenario. Will Graham would be a dream and a distraction and ultimately a terrible choice. He would

kill the rumored wife and likely forget about his many plans when granted direct access to the body of the man of his dreams. Will would likely return to find himself a dehydrated widower with love poetry covering every surface of his home.

A family member of one his pigs has seemed a likely choice; the universe does so love its little morality plays. From that stance, he could accomplish much of the necessary escape legwork and have some fun pissing on graves or even a tattoo commemorating their loved one's tableau.

Worst case scenario would be Chilton. Inhabiting a body that is unable to digest most proteins would be a horrible blow.

But it so happens that the universe has awarded him with the best scenario: Alana Bloom. The keeper of the keys and the tower and the man himself. The subject of his ever growing hatred and contempt.

"This is going to be fun," he thinks as he contemplates Margot's sleeping form beside him.

So much fun indeed.

Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

Hannibal visits Alana at the BSHCI while wearing some fabulous shoes.

The shower is indeed glorious. No luxury has been spared in the condominium sized bathroom and Hannibal indulges for an extended period. Alana's body is still sexually sated from its previous night's activity but he hopes to indulge soon; he is after all familiar with how this body's features.

He returns to the bedroom to find Margo awake and sitting on the bed with a Titian haired child.

"Morgan, say good morning to Mama!" Hannibal is disappointed but not surprised that Margot has kept the Verger tradition of names beginning with the letter M alive. He had hoped to encourage her to claim the fortune but to otherwise break free of the family legacy completely. Instead here she sits in the heart of the Verger's monolithic limestone ode to capitalism while embracing Mason's traditionally named child.

The boy greets him with Mason's wide grin. Whatever insanity plagued his father and grandfather is evident in every line of the child's body. Perhaps Hannibal will not kill either woman and instead let them watch as nature wins the battle over nurture for control of young Morgan. It is an option worth considering.

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Hannibal had been looking forward to driving himself to the BSHCI. The freedom of being behind the wheel might be cliche but it exists for a reason. The thought of driving at breakneck speed while listening to Beethoven's Fifth Symphony had appealed greatly. But, alas, Doctor Alana Bloom-Verger has a full security detail that involves her being loaded into a giant black SUV that is closely followed by another. Clearly her days of driving a Prius to

offset carbon emissions have been abandoned. Of course, he supposes that it would be hypocritical considering the damage caused by giant herds of livestock to the environment. Alana must be aware of the amount of methane emitted by the animals that they breed for slaughter. But then, Alana has always been a practitioner of hypocrisy, he doubts that billions of dollars has helped with that.

Hannibal is greeted by Alana's personal assistant Jeremy upon arrival at the hospital. "We are having issues with Doctor Lecter this morning," Jeremy states immediately. Alana must be adjusting to the exchange poorly.

"What kind of issues?"

"He woke up screaming and insisted upon a mirror. One was brought to the glass for him to look at and he fainted. When he woke up, he insisted that he has swapped bodies with you."

Hannibal could not help a brief laugh. "I hope that no one was naïve enough to believe that."

"No, ma'am. He was given a sedative when he woke up and is lying down."

They have arrived at Alana's office. "But is he awake?"

"Yes, but slurring his words and drooling slightly."

"I'll go see him and find out more about our supposed soul swap. I would have expected a scheme more sophisticated than the plot of a romantic comedy from him."

"Indeed. I've always found claims of his genius to be exaggerated."

Hannibal wishes that he had the time to suspend Jeremy by his testicles but it would have to wait. The desire to see Alana on the other side of the glass was too strong.

“He was genius enough to fool me,” he responds instead. “Unless, you are saying that you consider me a fool.”

He walks away during the younger man’s stuttered apology.

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Hannibal has plenty of experience walking in high heels. In fact, not only walking, but running, dancing, fucking, and one very memorable strangulation have occurred while wearing stilettos that emphasized his long legs and the curve of his ass.

But what he does not have experience with is traipsing through the BSHCI with a bum hip while wearing a towering pair of Manolo Blahniks. The hospital is a nineteenth century construction that has somehow never been retrofitted to comply with the Americans With Disabilities Act, and Alana has spitefully buried her prize guest in the basement. By the time he reaches his suite, Alana’s feet, hip, and lower back are screaming.

Alana rises to greet him when he enters, unsteady on her feet and indeed with signs of drool on her jump suit.

“Be careful,” he says in French, “I do not wish for my body to be injured while in your care.”

The two of them communicate in French often. It provides them with a degree of privacy from the always present cameras and microphones. But today, Alana is slow to respond. The sedative must be slowing her otherwise strong skills with the language.

“Where are Margot and our son? I swear if you hurt them…”

“Your family is fine for now. They will remain so as long as you cooperate.”

She throws herself at the glass, although an observer might better describe it as a collapse, and bangs on the glass with her fists. This lasts barely any time before she slides down to the floor and vomits copiously. Hannibal watches with interest. His prison haircut is shorter than his personal preference but he is pleasantly surprised to discover that he likes it. There is some distinguishing gray at the temples but the short cut keeps it at a minimum. His body looks good, too. Thinner but not weak, definitely still the frame of a virile man who once killed a barn full of Sardinians with just a hammer. He's unable to get a good view of the ass from this vantage point but he will definitely check himself over entirely before this is over. He is particularly curious to see how the brand looks.

Alana's stomach heaving has now turned to breathless heaving sobs. "You bastard!" she yells in English. "You can't do this to me." She does not specify exactly what she thinks Hannibal is doing to her. The mysterious forces of the universe are responsible for their current circumstances . He is as much a pawn in this game as his gaoler.

Hannibal looks up at the camera and gestures for assistance. Two orderlies arrive almost immediately.

"I believe that Doctor Lecter may have suffered a traumatic brain injury, a stroke or perhaps an aneurysm. Please prepare him for a trip to the hospital. Sedate him again to make it easier."

The man and the woman exchange wary looks but comply immediately. They do not doubt the diagnosis, only fear close proximity with the Cheasapeake Ripper. As they should.

Hannibal does not stay to watch. Instead he steps into the corridor to make a phone call.

Despite being an unknown number, the call is picked up on the first ring.

"Hello, Chiyoh. I am in need of your assistance."

Chapter 4

Chapter Summary

They arrive at the hospital and Hannibal makes his plans.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The hospital arrival would have been the ideal time to escape. His body is fully sedated, the single guard in the ambulance is seated in the front, and they are escorted by only one police car. A few quick kills followed by a quick get away. They could be out Baltimore in no time.

But, alas, the timing is not right. Chiyoh is on her way from the mountains of eastern Kentucky. The location makes sense for her. An isolated home where she is free of people and surrounded by game birds, while also being close enough to Lexington that she can visit civilization whenever she needs to replenish her Chanel No. 5 or feels the occasional pull for human companionship.

“I also like being able to attend University of Kentucky basketball games,” Chiyoh had added to his infinite confusion. After a long pause, she had added “I lived in Lithuania for many years. Do you think that I completely ignored the sport of your people?”

Hannibal must admit that he has given little thought over the years for how Chiyoh or his fellow Lithuanians spend their free time. But the thought of a loud gymnasium reeking of perspiration and the cacophony of squeaking shoes and whistles and buzzers and ***Gary Glitter*** is nightmarish. He wonders what is the national sport of Italy. If it is something more tasteful like auto racing or downhill skiing, he vows to begin referring to himself as Italian only.

And so here they are arriving at the hospital with him trapped in a tiny body with an aching hip, a body too weak to even dispense with the slightly taller female EMT let alone the armed guard and police officer. He stands back and supervises as they remove his precious body from the ambulance, admiring how handsome and peaceful he looks in strongly medicated repose.

The medical tests take several hours but come back normal, which makes sense because Hannibal Lecter is a healthy man in the prime of life. The hospital director is relieved, the woman wants Hannibal Lecter out of the her hospital as quickly as possible. But the cognitive tests do raise the concern of his medical team.

"He is slurring his words and is unable to answer basic questions," says the neurologist whom Hannibal recognizes from another time in his life. "It could be the sedation or it could be a sign of a problem. I'd like to keep him over night."

The hospital director grits her teeth but she is no match for the persuasiveness and medical knowledge of Hannibal Lecter. She not only agrees to hospitalization but Hannibal manipulates her into believing that it is her idea.

While they settle him into a room, he takes a moment to check in with Chiyoh. "I just entered Maryland," she answers. This is good as he believes that the early morning hours will be the best time to discharge himself from the hospital.

"We will need a van," he tells her.

"I already have one."

"How did you know?" he asks curiously.

"*Kupoliavimas*," she responds and hangs up.

Interesting. He had not known that Chiyoh even believed in fortune telling.

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Jeremy drops by to bring him paper work and dinner. It's from a local high end restaurant that Hannibal had once dismissed as overrated. Today he consumes it with joy, tears forming in

his eyes as he drinks the wine and tastes the grilled salmon and asparagus. He could, of course, prepare it much better but it is still welcome after years of institutionalized food.

The hospital director had been surprised by his announcement that he would stay at the hospital overnight but Jeremy took it in stride. Indeed he brings with him a gym bag. “I brought your PT clothes,” he says as he places the bag in the floor. “Figured that you might want to be more comfortable.” He then clears his throat. “I hate to ask but have you seen Tattlecrime?” the young man asks. His tentativeness conveys what has happened.

“Lounds found out?” He asks while reaching for Alana’s phone. Freddie Lounds has pictures of Alana supervising her patient being wheeled into the ER. He had made sure to cover his unconscious face but it has not stopped Freddie from speculating that the patient is Hannibal Lecter. “It is no secret that Dr. Bloom-Verger lobbied for the BSHCI job only so she could be close to her former lover. There are simply no other patients that she would be bothered to accompany to the hospital.”

Insightful and correct. His reading is interrupted by an incoming call from Jack Crawford.

“Why didn’t you call me immediately?” the man roars down the line.

His first instinct is to hang up on the BSU Director. But doing so would be out of character for Alana. The last thing that he needs is for Jack to question Alana’s behavior and to then hear from BSHCI staff about the soul swapping claims. Jack may be a fading guru but no need to risk a moment of illumination.

“I’m sorry. Everything happened quickly. There wasn’t time.”

“He’s faking it, right? He’s pulling an Abel Gideon and trying to escape.”

Hannibal bristles at the ludicrous suggestion that he - The Chesapeake Ripper, Il Mostro, The Bicycle Thief of Paris - would ever be reduced to borrowing from Gideon.

“It is MY medical opinion that he has suffered an incident. We have ruled out a stroke but I remain convinced that he has experienced a medical emergency.”

Jack does not like that although he does show some respectful deference to the messenger.

“I should come to the hospital,” he says although Hannibal can hear the tiredness in his voice.

“It’s not necessary, Jack,” he says softly in Alana’s soothing voice. “He’s unconscious and chained to his bed. There are both hospital and BSHCI guards on the door, the elevators, and on the entrances. We’ve got this.”

“But….

“Jack, I am going to personally sleep on the couch in his room. Would I do that if I thought that I was in any danger?”

That settles it. Jack will arrive in the morning to what will by then be an empty room.

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Hannibal opens the PT bag to find yoga pants, a t-shirt, and a hoodie, along with running shoes and a sports bra. He breathes a sigh of relief. If the high heels had been his bane earlier, the underwire bra has become the primary source of his misery.

He indulges in a quick shower. The cubicle is small and the soap is harsh and antiseptic but he still luxuriates in the experience. Hot water and privacy are two essentials that he is determined to be never be deprived of again. As he dresses, he takes the time to assess the situation and admits that he has had made a critical error. He should have called Chiyoh first and arranged the hospital transfer for the following morning. Instead, here he sits on the fifth floor of a well guarded hospital. He once had privileges in this hospital, but this wing was recently built and is unfamiliar to him, so they will be navigating blind. On top of that, there will be only two of them, and he is hampered by an unfamiliar body with mobility issues.

He pocketed a couple vials of fentanyl before leaving the BSHCI, hopefully they will be able to take out the guards that way. Otherwise, while guns may not be his preferred weapon, they will be crucial if this becomes a fight. Hostages will be necessary to assist with the transport of his body. The whole thing could collapse if the hospital shuts down the elevators. It occurs to him that Freddie Lounds is probably lurking in the hospital at that very moment.

Of course, the reporter could be useful. She will be another petite female in a lineup of petite women, but she is also smart, good in a crisis, and has demonstrated multiple times that she values her survival. Best to collect her now and then try to rest before Chiyoh arrives.

Chapter End Notes

My one completely non-negotiable head canon is that Chiyoh loves Chanel No. 5. She applies it liberally and makes Hannibal pay for the perfume, not the weaker eat de toilette.

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